



My Hip Hurts

Author's Disclaimer: The views expressed in this article are my own and may or may not be shared by those more enlightened than I.

Having celebrated the thirteenth anniversary of my thirty-ninth birthday, I find myself having to work a little harder to keep up. I have always felt that it is my responsibility to keep up with the times. I think I've done a pretty good job so far, at least with technology. I don't have a BlackBerry, but I have a cell phone with a tip calculator and I know how to use it. I don't have a Tivo. In fact I'm not even sure how to spell it, but I have a wide-screen high definition TV with a sweet Bose surround sound system. I'm not a wiz on the computer, but I know the basics. We are currently in the process of updating the technology on our ancient, fourteen year old Toro network LTC irrigation system. No problem, though I'm a little worried about remembering all the radio codes. I tend to remember events that took place twenty years ago better than those from yesterday. Damn, my hip hurts.

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When it comes to advancements in golf course management, I feel as though I'm ahead of the game. Experience pays off in this area. By continuing to modify and update my programs, utilizing new products, it is much easier to provide high quality playing conditions through the high-stress months of July and August. I sure could use forty or fifth gallons of chloro-dane, though.

When it comes to education, it has been very easy to keep up. The GCSAA provides a first class slate of seminars, both regionally and at the national conference. On the local level, the Midwest and Chicagoland associations, along with the ITF and several commercial companies, are doing a great job of providing educational opportunities. My hat's off to the directors and committees who do all of the leg work setting up these programs.

I guess the point I am trying to make is that I do my best to remain open-minded and keep up with what is happening in my industry and my world. I believe that I am a better golf course superintendent and person because of the associations that I belong to and the opportunities they have provided. However, I begin to feel a little old when I think about the direction the GCSAA has taken. Damn hip hurts. I don't know if I have kept up with the forward thinking of the association leaders, or if they are just leaving me behind.

Over the years, I have heard claims that the GCSAA has elevated the position and image of the golf course superintendent. If this is true, it is only to a small degree. What the GCSAA has done, and done well, has been to provide member services, through education and communication, that has allowed us, as individuals, to elevate our positions. We, as golf course superintendents, are responsible for longer tenure, higher salaries, and improved professional images.

It seems to me that the direction of the GCSAA is not unlike that of the county fair: bigger and better every year. We should drop the "of America" from the name. Perhaps this will entice more international members to join. Is bigger better in what should be a service association? Am I old-fashioned in thinking that the primary focus should be on improving what we have, instead of increasing what we have? I recently completed the survey sent out by

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Jon Jennings, CGCS regarding the association name change. I thank Jon and his committee for their work and I appreciated the chance to voice my opinion in the survey. I would have appreciated the opportunity to voice my opinion when the name of the conference and show was changed. Now there is a topic that really gets my hip throbbing. I was glad to see that we will remain, for the time being, golf course superintendents. I don't have any real problem with dropping "of America" from the association name. However, I do choose to believe that we are an American association serving an international market rather than an international association. Is that short-sighted?

About the conference and show, I see the logic in bringing in the owners and builders. I don't see the logic in bringing in the managers. The primary reason, I've been told, is to improve relations between golf course superintendents and managers, or general managers or CEOs.

As I write this article, the managers are attending their last conference in Hawaii, probably wondering where they went wrong. I have to be missing the big picture. It's like a joke I just don't get, right over the top of my head. There must be an upside to this that I'm not seeing. I sure see some downsides. Like, what if he snores louder than I do? Apparently there is an out clause. If we're not getting along after a couple of years, we can boot 'em. What are the odds of that?

I have always believed in and supported our associations. Even so, I reserve the right to express my views, both positive and negative. At this point in time, it seems to me that the GCSAA has chosen a path best suited to achieve the association's goals, even though it may not be in the best interest of the golf course superintendent.

As my esteemed grandfather used to say whenever he was worked up: damn, my hip hurts.



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